



MITHRIDATES VI AND THE PONTIC KINGDOM

*Edited by
Jakob Munk Højte*

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Mithridates VI Eupator and Iran

Marek Jan Olbrycht

Mithridates Eupator's Black Sea Empire – some preliminaries

The defeat of Antiochos III and the subjugation of western Asia Minor upon the death of Attalos III demonstrated the seemingly absolute supremacy of Rome over the kingdoms of western Asia in the 2nd century BC.¹ The humiliation suffered by the Seleukid king Antiochos IV in Egypt in 168 BC known as the “day of Eleusis”, exhibits the dominant position of Rome in her relations to the kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean.² The main Roman ally in Anatolia, Eumenes of Pergamon, suffered a similar humiliation when he tried to appeal in Rome for aid against the Galatians (winter 167/166 BC).³ At the same time, another Anatolian ruler, Prusias II of Bithynia visited Rome in the dress of a freedman, and offered fawning servility to the Roman senate.⁴ With this as background, the vigorous, partially defiant and aggressive actions of Mithridates VI Eupator (ca. 120-63 BC) directed against Rome are most surprising.⁵ Eupator strove for a fundamental strengthening of his kingdom. Having gained control of almost the entire circuit of the Black Sea including the Bosporan Kingdom, Eupator focused on Anatolia. The rising power of Pontos inevitably led to a conflict of interests with Rome, which aspired to an absolute hegemony in Asia Minor.

Most of the political issues concerning Eupator's policy seem to be a well-travelled ground – much scholarly literature exists on Pontos and Roman involvement in Anatolia. But if scholarly perspectives are limited to the interplay between Pontos and Rome, no coherent reconstruction of the period can be achieved. There was another power in western Asia at that time which must be taken properly into account – the Arsakid Parthian Empire. Regrettably, in the scholarly literature on Eupator's reign, Parthia has received only peripheral and scattered treatment so far. Well known are the increasing Parthian-Roman tensions when Lucullus and Pompeius, fighting Pontos and Armenia, approached the Parthian borders at the end of the 70's and in the 60's of the 1st century BC. At this time Eupator tried in vain to drum up the active support of the Parthians against Rome. In scholarship, Pontic-Parthian relations of that period, when Parthian Iran had just begun to recover from the deep crisis of the 70's and remained rather inactive in its western policy, have often been extrapolated to the earlier decades of Eupator's rule without regard to the evidence. However, some sources point to the existence of vivid connections between Eupator and the Arsakid Empire under Mithridates II

(123-87 BC), one of the greatest Parthian kings. Parthian policies of this period saw the very first contacts of the Arsakid state with Rome. The position of Armenia, which remained a Parthian vassal for a long time, was also essential. There is, however, a tendency in scholarship to treat individual events in the relations between Arsakid Iran, Armenia and Pontos as unconnected, with no attempt to discover the deeper links between them. Any active policy towards Rome by Eupator would have been impossible if he had not had his eastern frontier bordering the Parthian sphere of influence, including Armenia, firmly secured. Generally, to demonstrate a valid picture of Eupator's policies, a balanced assessment of Pontos' allies in Asia, especially the Arsakid Empire, and Armenia under Tigranes must be achieved.⁶ The focus of this study is on the relations between Mithridates Eupator, Tigranes of Armenia, and Parthia under Mithridates II the Great and his descendants, especially in the 90's and 80's of the 1st century BC.

According to Strabon, the Kingdom of Pontos and its neighbour to the south, Kappadokia, developed from the two Kappadokian satrapies of the Persian Empire.⁷ In both areas, a strong Iranian influence is discernible in the culture of the Hellenistic period.⁸ Mithridates Eupator appealed to Iranian traditions in many ways, exhibiting in particular the Achaemenid roots of his royal family.⁹ These cultural and religious connections demand a separate treatment.

Mithridates Eupator's first greater military operations were in countries around the eastern and northern shores of the Black Sea.¹⁰ He then turned his attention to the Anatolian kingdoms.¹¹ Military operations against Paphlagonia and Galatia took place. The next step was an invasion of Kappadokia, a country which was to play a special role in the development of Eupator's empire.¹² The Pontic Kingdom was not able to achieve the status of a local superpower without subjugating Kappadokia, which formed a major state in eastern Anatolia. The conflict over Kappadokia was multilateral for king Nikomedes of Bithynia, a former ally of Eupator, became involved in it. Moreover, Rome had by then for nearly a century a special relationship with Kappadokia.

Parthia under Mithridates II the Great as the dominant power in western Asia

The Arsakid Empire became in the second half of the 2nd century BC a great state with power over a number of countries in Asia.¹³ The Parthians drove the Seleukids out of their satrapies east of the Euphrates.¹⁴ Under Mithridates II (123-87 BC),¹⁵ Parthia remained the paramount power in the area, with possessions stretching from Transcaucasia (including Armenia) to central Asia and the borders of India. Mithridates II conducted many wars against his neighbours, especially against the nomads of central Asia, and brought many new nationalities into the Parthian Empire.¹⁶ Mithridates succeeded in finally subjugating Charakene on the Persian Gulf.¹⁷ Moreover, he came into contact with the powerful Chinese emperor Wudi.¹⁸

An important step in the development of the Arsakid royal ideology was the emergence of the title "King of Kings" which followed Mithridates II's military and diplomatic exploits. The new title was used on coins and in inscriptions (in Greek ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ) as well as in written Babylonian records (*šar šarrāni*).¹⁹ It was a peculiar breakthrough in royal ideology in Parthia and in the entire East. Mithridates II made a stronger stand than his predecessors as heir and restorer of Achaemenid tradition.²⁰ Simultaneously, the *tiara* became the customary Arsakid headgear on coins.²¹ It should be stressed that other changes were also introduced in Parthian coinage under Mithridates II.²² These innovations need to be seen as interrelated. Thus Mithridates II proved to be a successful and talented ruler as well as a military commander who formulated a long-term strategic plan for Arsakid policy.

Parthian power under Mithridates II shifted towards Transcaucasia. In that region, it was Armenia, which played a special role in Arsakid policy. Armenia's strategic position between Anatolia and the steppes north of the Caucasus and Iran and its military and economic potential, were recognized by Mithridates II. That is why the Arsakids made the control of Armenia one of the fundamental targets in their policy towards Rome up to the end of the dynasty.²³ Mithridates II subjugated Armenia early in his reign around 120 BC. The defeated king Artavasdes delivered his son Tigranes as hostage to the Arsakids.²⁴

Parthian policy was also deliberately pursued in the direction of Syria. Claims to Syria were first made in Parthia directly after the Arsakid victory over Antiochos VII Sidetes in 129 BC.²⁵ A clear manifestation of the growing Parthian interest for Syria was the annexation of Dura Europos, a Seleukid centre on the Euphrates (in 114/113 BC).²⁶ At this time the Seleukids were weak and involved in never-ending internal conflicts and struggles for power in Syria against the Jews, Nabataeans, the Greek cities in Syria and Phoenicia and various local rulers. The Parthians intervened in Syrian quarrels in 88/87 BC, having supported the Seleukid ruler Philippos against his brother Demetrios. The latter was captured and sent to the Arsakid king who kept him in honourable captivity until he died a natural death.²⁷ Following this victory the Parthian nominee Philippos was established in Antiochia and ruled there for several years up to 84/83 BC, fighting against his petty rivals.²⁸

Parthian strategic planning under Mithridates II included Kommagene, a country between Syria, Kilikia, Kappadokia and the Euphrates river which had been a Seleukid possession.²⁹ Kommagene became independent in about 163-162 BC when the reign of Ptolemaios, a Seleukid governor who proclaimed himself king, began.³⁰ Under Samos (ca. 130-100 BC), Mithridates I Kallinikos (ca. 100-70 BC) and Antiochos I Theos (ca. 70-36 BC) the kingdom tried to preserve its autonomy despite pressure from its major neighbours. Kommagenian rulers attempted to maintain friendly political relations with the Seleukids. Thus, Mithridates I Kallinikos married Laodike Thea, daughter of the Seleukid king Antiochos VIII Grypos, and mother of Antiochos I of

Kommagene (ca. 96 BC). In making this marriage, the Seleukid king accepted the independence of Kommagene.³¹ The small kingdom controlled the strategic Euphrates crossings from Mesopotamia to northern Syria and Anatolia and was thus the favoured invasion route for Iranian armies moving west.³² The strategic merits of Kommagene did not escape Parthian attention as Arsakid activities in that country are well attested from the middle of the 1st century BC.³³ In all likelihood, the close political links between Parthia and Kommagene were established several decades earlier under Mithridates II the Great. But the evidence for this question requires re-examination.

Josephus offers an intriguing account of some Parthian activities in the regions to the west of the Euphrates.³⁴ According to his narrative, a queen named Laodike summoned the Seleukid king Antiochos Eusebes (ca. 95-92 BC) to her assistance,³⁵ but he was killed in battle with the Parthians.³⁶ There are other sources concerning Eusebes' career, which however contain contradicting data. Eusebios maintained that Antiochos X Eusebes was beaten by Philippos and fled to the Parthians, later returning to regain his kingdom from Pompeius.³⁷ According to Appianos, Eusebes was expelled from his realm by Tigranes.³⁸ Apparently both puzzling accounts, assigning Eusebes a very long life, result from a confusion of father (Antiochos X Eusebes) and son (Antiochos XIII Asiaticos) caused by their homonymy.³⁹ Generally, the account of Josephus on Antiochos X is the most reliable.⁴⁰ Antiochos X's death may be dated approximately to 92 BC.⁴¹

The most essential question concerning the passage by Josephus analysed above is the identity of Laodike. Apparently, she ruled a kingdom, which was invaded by the Parthians. Josephus' account implies that her country was located somewhere on the borders of both Parthia and Syria, probably on the Euphrates. Unfortunately, the phrase mentioning the nation ruled by Laodike is corrupted and the manuscripts transmit different versions. B. Niese's edition offers the form Σαμηνών, attested in one of the codices (Codex Palatinus), but other codices give different forms including Γαλιήνων.⁴² A phonetical analogy for the form Σαμηνών is to be found in the term Σαμηνωί in Stephanos of Byzantion (s.v.), who describes them as an "Arabian nomadic people".⁴³ Unfortunately, they are otherwise unattested. Some scholars maintain that the term Σαμηνωί denotes the inhabitants of the Kommagenian city Samosata (named after Samos) and identify Laodike attested in Josephus with the Kommagenian queen of Seleukid stock Laodike Thea.⁴⁴ Regardless of the textual reconstruction of Josephus' account, the identification of Laodike seems highly probable.⁴⁵ Antiochos X rushed to Laodike's aid but was beaten and killed by the Parthians.⁴⁶ The conclusion is inevitable that in about 92 BC, the Parthians attacked Kommagene, subjugated it and killed the Seleukid ruler Antiochos, who was trying to help his relative Laodike. In other words, Parthian troops operated to the west of the Euphrates.

Kilikia is another territory to the west of the Euphrates, which saw Parthian activities in the 90's BC. Strabon maintains that the Parthians became

masters of Kilikia before the Armenians.⁴⁷ Some scholars link this evidence with Parthian actions in Syria in 88/87 BC.⁴⁸ But a more accurate date would be the period at the end of the 90's,⁴⁹ when the struggles between Rome, Pontos and Parthian dominated Armenia escalated. The operation in Kilikia may conceivably have been coordinated with the Parthian engagement in Kommagene and Parthian support for Tigranes' raids into Kappadokia in about 92 BC.

As a whole, the King of Kings, Mithridates II of Parthia, conducted an imperialistic policy in western Asia. Northern Mesopotamia and Dura Europos were incorporated into Parthia. To the west of the Euphrates, the Parthians were content with the establishment of protectorates. In many cases local vassal rulers (such as Philippos in northern Syria) were able to retain their thrones under Parthian suzerainty. Northern Syria and Kommagene remained for a time under Parthian control. Parthian military operations reached even to Kilikia. To the northwest of Kommagene and Kilikia, Kappadokia was of essential significance for any effective control of eastern and central Anatolia.

We have no proof that Rome appreciated the significance of Parthian advances in western Asia under Mithridates II. Apparently, Parthia received only intermittent attention from Rome. Strabon highlights the Roman neglect of the Parthian factor at this time and stresses "the Romans were not concerning themselves as yet so much about the peoples outside the Taurus; but they sent Scipio Aemilianus, and again certain others, to inspect the tribes and the cities".⁵⁰

It is relevant to this study to view the state of affairs in western Asia from the Parthian perspective. The growing power of Pontos, a kingdom bordering the Parthian dominated territories in Transcaucasia, must have attracted the attention of the Arsakids. Such interests were surely mutual for Mithridates Eupator strenuously strove to ensure support from kingdoms beyond the Roman sphere of influence. The Parthian Empire was certainly a desirable ally considering its resources, wealth, and military potential. Close relations between Pontos and Parthia were initiated prior to 102/101 BC. In that year, a *heroon* dedicated to Mithridates Eupator was erected on Delos. The monument is significant for many reasons, and offers evidence for Parthian-Pontic contacts. It was built in the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi by the Athenian Helianax, priest of Poseidon Aisios and the Dioskuroi-Kabeiroi. There were twelve relief busts inside the *heroon* and one in the *tympanon* of the façade. The reliefs are mutilated but can be identified by inscriptions which name several dignitaries and generals of Mithridates Eupator, including Gaius son of Hermaios, synthropos of Eupator, Dorylaos, chief of the bodyguard, Papias, Eupator's chief doctor, Asklepiodoros, Helianax' father, Diophantos, the general, Ariarathes VII of Kappadokia, Eupator's nephew. The only persons not belonging to Eupator's family, court or army were Antiochos VIII Grypos of Syria and two Parthian officials – envoys of the Arsakid King of Kings.⁵¹ Apparently due to

his Seleukid descendance, Antiochos VIII Grypos (126-c. 96 BC), an otherwise weak king, was held in regard by some rulers in the Levant and Anatolia. Grypos probably maintained friendly relations with Mithridates Eupator.⁵²

The Parthians were apparently envoys of Mithridates II, who is called King of Kings in one of the inscriptions.⁵³ The *heroon* was erected by a private individual, but Helianax can hardly have acted without agreement from Mithridates Eupator. The building was in fact intended as a propaganda monument for the Pontic king demonstrating his magnanimity and power documented by international links. The presence of the Parthian envoys at the court of Mithridates and the reverence shown them in the Delos *heroon* imply that Mithridates Eupator and the Parthian king cooperated already by 102/101 BC (as they did in the 90's), and that Mithridates Eupator had special relations to Parthia. Viewed from the Arsakid perspective, the strong Parthian interest in Anatolia at the early stages of Mithridates Eupator's career must be emphasised.

Tigranes II as a Parthian vassal and Pontic ally

To understand the political constellation in western Asia at the beginning of the 1st century BC, the position of Armenia should be analyzed. The Pontic Kingdom became neighbour of Armenia Maior after Mithridates Eupator acquired the eastern Anatolian country called Armenia Minor from its ruler Antipater.⁵⁴ Without securing the eastern frontier of his state, Mithridates Eupator would have been unable to conduct large-scale operations in Anatolia. Thus his interest in Armenia and its Parthian suzerain must have begun quite early. Parthian control of Armenia, dated from 120 BC onwards, may have compelled Mithridates Eupator to reach out to the Arsakid Empire. It seems therefore highly probable that one of the essential components in the Pontic-Parthian relations, established by 102/101 BC, was Pontic interest in receiving at least safety guarantees from Parthian dominated Armenia and Parthia herself.

In 95 BC, Tigranes ascended the Armenian throne.⁵⁵ After spending about 25 years at the Parthian court, he was released by his sovereign Mithridates II and appointed king of Armenia. The year 95 BC for Tigranes' accession can be surmised from Plutarch, who describes a meeting between Tigranes and Appianus Claudius Pulcher in the winter of 71/70 BC – by that time Tigranes had ruled for 25 years, thus he must have begun his rule in about 95 BC.⁵⁶ Strabon writes that Tigranes obtained "the privilege of returning home", a statement underscoring his vassal status. On this occasion, the Arsakid king exacted the cession of the area called "Seventy Valleys" to Parthia – it was a peculiar reward or pledge.⁵⁷ The cession of that area and Strabon's phrase mentioned above imply that Tigranes was to be fully controlled by the Parthian King of Kings.

It is a commonplace that scholars overestimate Tigranes' position at the beginning of his rule.⁵⁸ The Arsakid Empire was at this time at the apex of

its power and it is impossible to see Tigranes as an independent ruler from the beginning. Obviously, at least two stages in Tigranes' career should be distinguished. In the first stage, encompassing a period beginning in 95 BC, he remained a faithful vassal of Parthia. This allegiance to the Arsakid king endured until the end of the 80's. In 83 BC Tigranes was still viewed as a Parthian vassal (see below). There is no evidence for any anti-Parthian action of Tigranes before 80 BC. The second stage saw Tigranes' independent policy and establishment of an empire, partially at the expense of Parthia.

There is evidence coming from Iran of a close connection between Parthia and Tigranes. According to the parchment from Avroman in Iranian Kurdistan, dated to 88 BC,⁵⁹ the second wife of Mithridates II, Aryazate surnamed Automa, was daughter of the "Great King Tigranes".⁶⁰ As the Parthian ruler is named in the text Great King of Kings, the hierarchy is maintained and Tigranes appears as a vassal. His title, however, points to the fact that he was respected by his sovereign, apparently due to his exploits achieved in full accordance with Parthian policy – otherwise the Parthian king would have removed Aryazate.

Justinus provides a hint that Tigranes' enthronement was not an accidental event but a well-thought out move made by the Parthian King of Kings to meet Mithridates Eupator's wishes. While mentioning Tigranes' accession, Justinus says that Mithridates Eupator "was eager to entice this man (sc. Tigranes) to join him in the war against Rome which he had long had in mind" (translation J.C. Yardley).⁶¹ The very next moves were Tigranes' invasion of Sophene and intervention in Kappadokia against Ariobarzanes, a Roman nominee. Moreover, Mithridates Eupator gave his daughter Kleopatra to Tigranes in marriage.⁶² All these facts testify to the existence of specific strategic planning on the part of the Arsakid King of Kings and his Pontic partner. Thus in 95 BC a new alliance was established that was to remain active for many years.

The first military action of Tigranes was the subjugation of Sophene in about 95 BC.⁶³ At this time, Sophene was ruled by Artanes or Orontes,⁶⁴ a descendant of Zariadres, a Seleukid general who made himself independent in about 189 BC. Sophene had often been a bone of contention between Armenia and Kappadokia.⁶⁵ The Sophenian dynast was probably not deposed by Tigranes but continued to rule as vassal of the Armenian king. It was only after Tigranes' annexation of Sophene that Armenia acquired a common frontier with Kappadokia and easy access to the Euphrates crossing at Tomisa, leading to Melitene and the Kappadokian hinterland.⁶⁶ The next operation of Tigranes was an invasion of Kappadokia itself (see below).

Tigranes' activities in Sophene, then in Kappadokia, and his close cooperation with Mithridates Eupator must have been undertaken on Parthian initiative; the Arsakid king, a politician of broader horizons, was surely aware of the Roman dominance in Anatolia and the Roman appetite for conquest. It is hardly a coincidence that when Tigranes came to Armenia, Mithridates

Eupator introduced a new era and began a new, aggressive policy directed against his Anatolian neighbours and Rome. Moreover, he made significant changes in his coinage. With the new alliance established, Mithridates Eupator was able to challenge Roman power in Anatolia. At the same time, the Parthians showed their interest in control of Syria, Kilikia and Kommagene. It is conceivable that the Parthians sought to secure their sphere of interest by annihilating – either through Pontos or Armenia – Roman influence in Kappadokia, a country stretching along the Euphrates and bordering on Kommagene, Armenia, and even Kilikia Pedias, i.e. areas which Parthia controlled or intended to subjugate. Thus, Kappadokia was of vital importance for Mithridates Eupator, Parthia and for Rome. It is thus of little surprise that Kappadokia remained the main area of dispute in eastern Anatolia in the 90's and 80's of the 1st century BC.

Mithridates Eupator versus the Arsakid Empire

Through diplomacy and his use of policy, Mithridates Eupator expanded Pontos' network of foreign connections. In the sources, Parthian Iran is mentioned as a major ally of Pontos. That Mithridates sought Parthian assistance against Rome, is strikingly confirmed by Memnon of Herakleia:

He [Mithridates] increased his realm by subduing the kings around the river Phasis in war as far as the regions beyond the Caucasus, and grew extremely boastful. On account of this, the Romans regarded his intentions with suspicion, and they passed a decree that he should restore to the kings of the Scythians their ancestral kingdoms. Mithridates modestly complied with their demands, but gathered as his allies the Parthians, the Medes, Tigranes the Armenian, the kings of the Scythians and Iberia.⁶⁷

Usually, this passage is treated with suspicion as a hollow propaganda claim. In my opinion, however, the account is consistent and reliable and gives essential evidence for Mithridates' special concern for his eastern neighbours and allies. Significantly, Parthia is the first kingdom named. The Medes are often mentioned in the sources separately from the Parthians for they formed one of the richest parts of the Arsakid Empire. This applies not only to Greater Media (with Ekbatana), incorporated into the royal Arsakid domain, but also to Media Atropatene, ruled by vassal kings.⁶⁸ Armenia was a vassal kingdom of Parthia at this time. Worthy of note is also the mention of Iberia.⁶⁹ In the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC, the Iberians were probably dependent on Armenia, in other words they belonged to the Parthian sphere of influence. During the 2nd century BC, Armenia seized southern parts of Iberia.⁷⁰ When Armenia was subjugated by the Parthian king Mithridates II in about 120 BC, other Transcaucasian lands, including Iberia (and perhaps Albania), probably

also became Parthian vassals. A massive influx of Parthian coins from the time of Mithridates II into Armenia, Iberia and Albania⁷¹ suggests that these countries were simultaneously incorporated into the Parthian sphere of interest. The sources testify to the fact that Mithridates Eupator seized Armenia Minor and Kolchis,⁷² but that he did not try to penetrate and conquer Iberia. Apparently, the Iberian rulers of this time acted as Parthian vassals and supported Mithridates Eupator as his allies.

The passage in Memnon matches another account offered by Appianos who reports a speech, directed to the Roman generals just before the outbreak of the First Mithridatic War, by an envoy of Mithridates Eupator, Pelopidas. The ambassador, listing the Pontic allies and subjects, mentioned Kolchians, Greeks from the Black Sea, and the barbarians beyond them. Then he named as allies the peoples of the northern Pontic region – Scythians, Sarmatians, Taurians, Bastarnai, Thracians and all tribes roaming on the Tanais (Don), Ister (Danube) and Lake Maiotis (Sea of Azov). Lastly Pelopidas stated: "Tigranes of Armenia is his son-in-law and Arsakes of Parthia his friend (*philos*)".⁷³ The list in Appianos, reflecting the state of affairs of 89 BC, is longer than that in Memnon but this is due to the fact that he includes a number of peoples from the northern and western Black Sea area. Appianos does not explicitly speak of the Iberians, but they may be included in the category of the tribes "beyond" Kolchis and the Black Sea Greeks.

According to the account of Poseidonios of Apameia, the supporter of Pontos at Athens, Athenion claimed that the Armenian and "Persian" kings were allies of Mithridates Eupator (in 88 BC).⁷⁴ His rhetorically embellished speech does not reflect the real nature of the relations between the Asian states for the orator maintains that the kings of Armenia and of the "Persians" served Mithridates Eupator as bodyguards. But it implies that in 88 BC close political links existed between Pontos, Armenia, and Parthia.

The evidence provided by Appianos, Memnon and Poseidonios is solid and there is no reason to doubt its credibility. The conclusion is inevitable that just before the First Mithridatic War, Mithridates Eupator was allied to Parthia and Armenia. Thus, any analysis of the political situation before the outbreak of the First Mithridatic War in 89 BC must include the Parthian factor. The Arsakid Empire with its vassal kingdoms, including Armenia, was enormously rich in financial resources. Mithridates Eupator was aware of the importance of this resource base for any serious conflict with Rome. He did his best in uniting the peoples around the Black Sea. At this time, however, Parthia was at her zenith and the support of the Arsakid King of Kings was vital for the Pontic ruler in planning greater military confrontations in Anatolia.

One of the eminent scholars studying Mithridates Eupator's policy asked an important question: "What emboldened Mithridates to believe that he could secure decisive military victory where the Seleucids and the Macedonians had failed?". The scholar, like many others, looked for an answer in the numbers of

his soldiers and ships.⁷⁵ The question applies, however, not only to his strength in armies but also to his financial resources and alliances. Mithridates Eupator put particular emphasis on financial preparations for war. In this connection, a glance at the royal monetary issues of Mithridates Eupator in the decade just before the first war against Rome is needed. In the period from May to November of 95 BC, the production of Pontic coinage rose steeply.⁷⁶ This increase took place while an alliance with Tigranes, supported by Parthia, was concluded and major military actions were in sight. Another apex in coinage production occurred in the year 92 BC, when Tigranes, supported by Parthia, intervened in Kappadokia, and Mithridates Eupator sent Sokrates Chrestos to subjugate Bithynia. In 89-88 BC, the issues became abundant in connection with the First Mithridatic War.⁷⁷

Pontos had some metal resources,⁷⁸ but the huge amount of gold and silver minted in the 90's and 80's BC may perhaps partially be explained by Parthian support. A perfect parallel is provided by Syria in 88-84/3 BC when the Parthian vassal Philippos minted a large body of coins,⁷⁹ incomparable with the modest emissions of his predecessors. It is worth noting that Parthian coinage under Mithridates II assumed the dimensions of mass production and Parthian coins poured into Armenia, Iberia and Albania.⁸⁰ Conceivably Mithridates II provided Pontos with additional resources to strengthen his Pontic ally in his military activities.⁸¹ This would be a resumption of old Achaemenid policies in Anatolia, the Aegean and the Levant, carried out by means of silver and gold.

Mithridates Eupator's and Tigranes II's military operations in Kappadokia

In about 100/99 BC, Mithridates Eupator killed his nephew, Ariarathes VII, and enthroned his own eight-year-old son known under the name Ariarathes IX in Kappadokia, with Gordios as co-regent. Nikomedes of Bithynia became involved in the conflict and appealed to Rome for aid. The Roman Senate ordered Mithridates Eupator to evacuate Kappadokia. Under Roman pressure, Mithridates withdrew his son and probably the allied Kappadokian noble Gordios.⁸² Finally, the Romans "allowed" the Kappadokians to choose a king, and Ariobarzanes (IX) was elected. The sources also speak of some support for Gordios as king in Kappadokia.⁸³ At this moment, in the middle of the 90's BC, Mithridates Eupator remained without allies in Anatolia, and his military ambitions must have seemed rather hopeless. The Pontic king heard the provocative warnings of Marius, visiting Anatolia, including Kappadokia and Galatia.⁸⁴

It was only after the Parthian supported Tigranes joined Eupator that the political play in Anatolia took a new, dynamic course. In fact, Arsakid support gave Mithridates new impetus for his foreign policy. Politically significant was the introduction of the so-called Bithynian-Pontic era in Pontos, attested to on coinage from 95 BC (year 202 of that era).⁸⁵ This measure must have

been linked with the start of a new stage in Eupator's policy. The dated royal issues of Mithridates Eupator show a number of new features. The obverse depicts the king's portrait, the reverse Pegasos or a grazing stag with a star and crescent in the field.⁸⁶

The support of Parthian dominated Armenia and direct Parthian aid were, actually, *conditio sine qua non* for Eupator's new policy, initiated in 95 BC. It was due to this support that the Pontic king "began to think in terms of war with Rome".⁸⁷ Pro-Roman Ariobarzanes, ruling in Kappadokia, was ousted by Tigranes in 95 or early in 94 BC in the interest of Mithridates Eupator, his Kappadokian ally Gordios, and Parthia.⁸⁸ Mithridates, convinced by the strength of his allies, took the initiative in Anatolia, showing disrespect for Roman demands.⁸⁹

The Roman reaction was to send Sulla to Asia. The real reason for the expedition was not only to reinstate Ariobarzanes but also to check Eupator's intentions. Sulla did not have a large army but made extensive use of his allies. After inflicting heavy casualties on the Kappadokians themselves, and even heavier casualties on the Armenians, who came to help the Kappadokians, he drove Gordios into exile and made Ariobarzanes king.⁹⁰ In Kappadokia, some Pontic troops also opposed Sulla but it seems that Mithridates Eupator tried to make his case there indirectly by appointing the Pontic commander Archelaos a general in Gordios' service.⁹¹ Sulla's main enemies were the Armenians and the Kappadokians from the anti-Roman faction.

The date of Sulla's expedition is disputed. For a long time, the year 92 BC was the common date used by scholars.⁹² E. Badian re-dated Sulla's expedition to 96 BC and this date is now widely accepted.⁹³ A.N. Sherwin-White proposed the year 94 for Sulla's mission in one work,⁹⁴ but curiously he seems to return to 92 or even 91 BC in other studies.⁹⁵ In the attempt to establish the disputed date one circumstance has been neglected so far; in all likelihood, Sulla's expedition was conducted in answer to Tigranes' intervention in Kappadokia. The date thus depends on the timing of Tigranes' enthronement and his intervention in Kappadokia. As stated above, Tigranes took the Armenian throne in about 95 BC. Then, after annexing Sophene, he invaded Kappadokia, apparently no earlier than in 95. Under such circumstances, the date 96 BC for Sulla's expedition is impossible to accept. Even the year 95 BC is rather improbable, taking into account the needed time for news of events in distant Asia to reach Rome and for the Romans to react to them. Under such circumstances, the year 94 BC seems to be the earliest possible date for Sulla's mission.^{95a}

An essential observation is that Sulla's action was the first instance since the peace of Apameia in 188 BC of a Roman army intervening in Anatolia.⁹⁶ It seems that the new policies of Mithridates Eupator, his alliance with Parthian-dominated Armenia and Parthia herself, as well as the intervention of Tigranes in Kappadokia surprised and worried the Romans. Their reaction was due to the emergence of a new active alliance that must have been perceived as

extremely dangerous for Roman interests in Anatolia. Sulla's expeditionary force reached to the borders of the Parthian sphere of influence. This is why Parthia's envoys intending to check Roman intentions approached Sulla.

Sulla and the Parthians in Kappadokia

While on the banks of the Euphrates, Sulla was visited by Orobazos, representing the Arsakid King of Kings Mithridates II.⁹⁷ Many misunderstandings arose during this meeting so it needs scrutiny. The Parthians wanted to discuss the possibility of entering into a treaty of friendship (*philia*) and alliance (*symmachia*).⁹⁸ As the newly appointed Kappadokian ruler Ariobarzanes accompanied Sulla, the conference probably took place in eastern Kappadokia in the area of Melitene, bordering on Sophene.⁹⁹ According to Plutarch: "Sulla put out three chairs, one for Ariobarzanes, one for Orobazos, and one for himself, and negotiated while seated between the other two. The Parthian king later put Orobazos to death for this".¹⁰⁰

Plutarch's account has been commented on many times. The *communis opinio* maintains that Orobazos was executed because he took a lower seat than Sulla or because the ambassador allowed Sulla to assume a position of primacy at the meeting by sitting in the centre.¹⁰¹ While focusing on Plutarch's ambiguous wording, scholars have overlooked an essential circumstance – the presence of Ariobarzanes, who had been deposed from the throne by Tigranes acting according to Parthian demands. Sulla had reinstalled him in Kappadokia. Orobazos' fault was thus his participation in negotiations with Ariobarzanes, who was a usurper in the eyes of the Parthian King of Kings. This is why the envoy was executed on the orders of his sovereign.

Another point should be stressed. After Sulla's intervention, no negotiations between Armenia and Rome were initiated, although the Armenians had been involved in Kappadokia. Instead of this, a meeting between Sulla and the Parthians was organized. The conclusion must be that Sulla saw no need to talk to the vassal ruler of Armenia because the real power behind him was Parthia.

There is no solid evidence for the often expressed assumption that a formal treaty was concluded between Sulla and Orobazos. Among the ancient authors it is only Florus who speaks rather incidentally of a *foedus* between Sulla and the Parthians.¹⁰² The not always credible Florus, writing a panegyric, apparently made an error, and ascribed to Sulla a treaty of the same kind as those that decades later were concluded by Lucullus and Pompeius.¹⁰³ The opinion¹⁰⁴ that the river Euphrates was made the common frontier in the alleged treaty between Rome and Parthia should be fully discarded.¹⁰⁵ As to Arsakid Iran, there is no evidence that Mithridates II considered himself bound by any kind of territorial restraints in his western policies. In the 90's-80's BC, Parthian armies crossed the Euphrates many times as in the 50's-30's BC. The fate of Syria, Kommagene and eastern Anatolia including Kappadokia was

in the decades of the 90's-80's not yet decided in favour of Rome. Recognition of the Euphrates frontier would have been a unilateral gesture of acceptance of Roman supremacy in western Asia by Mithridates II. As rightly remarked by J. Wolski: "The historians who put forward this claim were only following the old and well-established habit of belittling the Parthians, this time in favour of Rome".¹⁰⁶

Indeed, some scholars argue that Parthia under Mithridates II was a second-class kingdom weaker even than Armenia. A. Keaveney, for example, maintains that Parthia through negotiations with Sulla "attempted to hold the middle ground between great powers".¹⁰⁷ R.D. Sullivan expresses the opinion that: "The hopes of Mithridates II of finding in Rome a counterweight (sc. to Mithridates Eupator and Tigranes) received a rebuff in the behaviour of Sulla",¹⁰⁸ and that "Roman support of Ariobarzanes might indirectly protect Parthia from Eupator and Tigranes".¹⁰⁹ According to P.L. Manaserjan, Sulla and the Parthians negotiated an alliance directed against Parthia!¹¹⁰ This is a fully unfounded assessment. The sources contradict these views as Parthia under Mithridates II was a great power and even in times of crisis, Arsakid Iran remained a mighty state capable of stopping the Roman advances in Asia.

The Parthians closely followed affairs in Kappadokia for they stood behind Tigranes. When Sulla forced Tigranes to withdraw, the Arsakid king tried to determine Roman intentions towards Kappadokia, Anatolia, and Armenia. The Arsakid King of Kings became convinced that the Roman presence in Kappadokia was dangerous for Parthian interests in the neighbouring areas including Kommagene, Kilikia and Armenia. Thus, the anti-Roman actions in Anatolia were to be intensified by Pontos and Armenia acting as directly engaged powers, whereas Parthia supported their allies financially and took important actions to the south in Kommagene, Kilikia, and Syria. An agreement was concluded between the rulers of Pontos and Armenia that the subjugated cities and land should belong to Eupator, and the captives and all movable goods to Tigranes.¹¹¹ Justinus speaks of an alliance between Pontos and Armenia at this time. He is right – a new agreement was formed against Rome, whereas the former agreement of the year 95 BC was officially directed against local rulers of Anatolia including Kappadokia. The strategic planning of Mithridates Eupator, Tigranes, and the Arsakid King of Kings aimed at abolishing Sulla's arrangements in Kappadokia would inevitably develop into an open confrontation with Rome.

Further struggles over Kappadokia

Sulla's intervention in Kappadokia in about 94 BC caused a counterattack of the Arsakid king conducted by his Armenian vassal and coordinated with Mithridates Eupator's operations. Ariobarzanes was ousted by an army led by two generals named Bagoas and Mithraas in about 92 BC.¹¹² Ariarathes (IX)

was installed again in Kappadokia. The names of the commanders Bagoas and Mithraas are purely Iranian. They acted as Tigranes' general.¹¹³ Indeed they could have been Parthian officials in Armenian services, but they are otherwise unattested.

While Tigranes operated in Kappadokia, Mithridates Eupator sent Sokrates Chrestos, Nikomedes' own brother, with an army against Bithynia. Sokrates subjugated the kingdom. Appianos stresses that the actions in Bithynia and Kappadokia were simultaneous.¹¹⁴ Thus, we can discern a coordinated anti-Roman action of Pontos and Armenia in Anatolia. But the Parthians did not remain idle either. At this time they subjugated Kommagene (about 92 BC) and probably attacked Kilikia. It seems that Mithridates Eupator was now prepared for a full scale confrontation with Rome. His rear was secure, and he had huge financial and military resources at his disposal. The coin production was intensified in 92 and again from May-June 89 BC. It is plausible that this increased amount of minted coins was connected to military preparations.¹¹⁵

The Roman Senate ordered the restoration of Ariobarzanes in Kappadokia and Nikomedes in Bithynia. The Roman general Manius Aquilius reinstalled Ariobarzanes at the end of 90 or in 89 BC.¹¹⁶ According to Appianos, Mithridates Eupator had his forces ready for war, but did not resist the Roman actions,¹¹⁷ and he remained inactive even when Nikomedes ravaged western Pontos.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Mithridates Eupator had Sokrates killed in order to display his good will toward Rome. As to Kappadokia, Tigranes' troops apparently retreated from that country. Contrary to the Roman demands, the reinstated Ariobarzanes Philorhomaioi did not take part in the hostilities against Mithridates Eupator. The Pontic king entered negotiations with the Roman legates in Asia and complained of Nikomedes' hostile actions.¹¹⁹ The ambassadors of Nikomedes maintained that Mithridates Eupator stood in "complete readiness, as for a great and predetermined war, not merely with his own army, but also with a great force of allies, Thracians, Scythians, and all the other neighbouring peoples".¹²⁰ The passage points to the potential of Mithridates Eupator and his allies.

When the Pontic-Roman talks failed, Mithridates Eupator sent his son Ariarathes with a large army to seize Kappadokia. Ariobarzanes was quickly driven out.¹²¹ The sources make no mention of Tigranes' involvement in this action, but it cannot be excluded. Significantly, several years after this operation, Tigranes was persuaded by Mithridates Eupator to make an incursion into Kappadokia (78 BC).¹²² Thus, this country saw several joint Pontic-Armenian operations, but the testimonies often do not go into details.

Generally, Mithridates Eupator intended to eliminate any Roman threat to Asia Minor and showed eagerness for armed confrontation with Rome, but he "wanted to have good and sufficient cause for war".¹²³ At the same time, Mithridates Eupator tried to mislead Rome about his intentions.¹²⁴

The wars between Rome and Pontos and their implications

In 89 BC, Mithridates Eupator was at the height of his power. He was secure in an alliance with Parthian-dominated Armenia and Parthia herself. He had received support from many peoples, tribes and cities around the Black Sea. As a whole, a huge military force, numbering more than 200,000 soldiers, was at his disposal.¹²⁵ The Social War in Italy offered a good opportunity for anti-Roman actions on the part of the Pontic king in Anatolia.¹²⁶

The events of the First Mithridatic War (89-85 BC) are well known and there is no need to repeat this story.¹²⁷ While Mithridates fought the Romans, the Parthians intervened in Syria and made it their protectorate (88/87 BC). In 87, Mithridates Eupator's mighty ally, Mithridates II of Parthia, died. It was surely a blow to the Pontic king. Under Mithridates II's successors Parthia was to plunge into internal struggles till the very end of the 70's.¹²⁸

Mithridates II was followed by Gotarzes (Parthian Godarz), probably his son, ruling until about 80 BC.¹²⁹ The next king known from Babylonian texts is Orodes (Parthian Worod) mentioned in 80/79, 78/77, and 76/75 BC, who was probably a rival of Gotarzes.¹³⁰ About 78/77 BC, the throne of Parthia was taken by Sinatrukes, supported by the nomadic Sakaraukai, who reigned to 70/69.¹³¹ The evidence for the history of Parthia in the period 87-70 BC is scanty but the sources indicate devastating internal conflicts in the 70s. Moreover, Parthia remained involved in the struggles in eastern Iran and central Asia. More than twenty years after his appointment as vassal king of Armenia, the chance had come for Tigranes to take a leading role in the Levant and the adjacent regions. The crisis in Parthia offered a strong incentive for action and Tigranes now felt free to act against Orodes and Sinatrukes to expand his kingdom.

According to Justinus, the Syrians upon the death of Philippos (84/83 BC), exhausted by dynastic conflicts looked around for foreign kings, some being in favour of Mithridates (of Pontos?), others of Ptolemaios of Egypt. Finally, the Syrians settled on Tigranes, who "apart from his own domestic strength had the additional advantage of being an ally of the Parthians and a relative of Mithridates" (83 BC).¹³² The evidence is unambiguous – when Tigranes was proclaimed king in Antiochia, he was "still allied with the Parthians which was one source of strength that recommended him to the people of Syria".¹³³ Thus Tigranes seized Syria primarily by diplomatic efforts rather than military actions. But in this politically and ethnically divided country there were many petty rulers like Antiochos Eusebes who opposed Tigranes as they had opposed Philippos and others. This is why some sources speak of forceful action on the part of Tigranes.¹³⁴ The annexation of Syria was the decisive step made by Tigranes, who thereafter built a huge empire.¹³⁵ In the 70's, the Armenian king defeated Sinatrukes, a ruler supported by a faction of the Parthian aristocracy during the civil war in Iran.¹³⁶ At the same time, he recovered the "Seventy Valleys" and subjugated Gordyene, Osrhoene, Media Atropatene, and Nisibis. To the west of the Euphrates, apart from Syria, Ti-

granes annexed Kommagene, Kilikia Pedias, and parts of Phoenicia.¹³⁷ Then he took the title King of Kings attested in some literary sources and on coins.¹³⁸ It was also in the 70's that Tigranes founded his new capital Tigranokerta.¹³⁹ In this period, Parthia conducted no active policy in the west. The old alliance between Parthia and Pontos had ceased to exist.

During the Third Mithridatic War Mithridates Eupator sought closer ties to the Parthian kings Sinatrukes and Phraates III, but the Arsakids showed a marked reluctance to become involved in Anatolian quarrels. Mithridates Eupator requested Parthian help in 73 BC, but the aged Sinatrukes was unwilling to assist. Tigranes, after ignoring many entreaties from his wife Kleopatra, Eupator's daughter, eventually agreed to a renewed alliance with Pontos.¹⁴⁰ Lucullus devastated Pontos and drove Mithridates to take refuge with Tigranes in Armenia in 71 BC. By Tigranes' decision, Mithridates was kept 20 months in isolation.¹⁴¹ This action is an example of the fatal discord present among the Asian kings, which proved extremely favourable to the Romans.

When faced with a crushing defeat, Tigranes and Mithridates sent messengers to Parthia to obtain aid. Lucullus dispatched opposing legates asking that the Parthians should either help him or remain neutral. The Parthian king Phraates III made secret agreements with both the Armenian-Pontic envoys and the Romans (70/69 BC).¹⁴² Weight should be placed on the *Letter of Mithridates to King Arsakes* (*Epistula Mithridatis*), assigned to Sallust,¹⁴³ as an informative source concerning Pontic-Parthian relations at this time. Allegedly Mithridates wrote the letter where he tries to induce the Parthian king Phraates III to become his ally. It seems that the letter reflects a genuine document found by the Romans in the personal archives of Mithridates.¹⁴⁴

The *Epistula Mithridatis* (3) tells of Arsakes' anger against Tigranes caused by a recent war between Armenia and Parthia. Mithridates appeals to Phraates III and seeks to persuade him that Tigranes is at his mercy and would accept an alliance on any terms the Parthian king might wish. The letter underscores Roman aggressiveness and the Roman desire for domination in Asia. Significantly, Mithridates brings Arsakes' attention to the Parthian resources of manpower and gold (16-19).

According to the *Epistula Mithridatis*, Mithridates proposed a strategic plan: it presupposed a close cooperation between the Parthians, operating from Mesopotamia, and Mithridates and Tigranes, attacking the Romans from Armenia (21). Strategically, it was a perfect concept, in fact imitating the plans carried out in the 90's BC, when Mithridates II ruled in Parthia and aided Mithridates Eupator.

In the *Epistula Mithridatis*, Mithridates warns that a war with Rome will be inevitable for Arsakes, for the wealth of Parthia would attract the attention of the Romans called *latrones gentium*. The letter's conclusion is a warning against the Arsakids' dilatoriness, which would lead to the defeat of the enemies of Rome (23).

All in all, in spite of Pontic and Armenian approaches, Phraates III remained reluctant to enter into the conflict between Tigranes, Mithridates, and

Rome. In 66 BC, Pompeius superseded Lucullus as commander in the East, and some military encounters took place between Parthia and Rome. At this time the power of Pontos and Armenia was already crushed, and Pontos was incorporated into the Roman Empire. Additionally, Rome subjugated Syria, which also became a Roman province. Armenia, although defeated by the Romans, was to play an important part in the struggles between Parthia and Rome for centuries.

Conclusions

Having gained control of almost the entire circuit of the Black Sea, Mithridates Eupator spent the last thirty years of his life engaged in a bitter struggle with Rome. In the meantime, the Parthians under Mithridates II turned their attention to the situation in Anatolia. Roman expansion was a danger for the Arsakid domination in Transcaucasia, Mesopotamia and northern Syria. If Parthia viewed herself as the genuine successor of the Seleukid Empire, she had a rightful claim to the countries in Asia south of the Tauros range, i.e. to Kommagene, Kilikia Pedias, and Syria. It seems that the Parthian king treated Mithridates Eupator as a natural ally in a position to counter the Roman expansion in Anatolia. In 95 BC a new political constellation, initiated by Arsakid Iran, and embracing Pontos, Armenia and Parthia, emerged in Asia, and the anti-Roman actions of the Pontic and Armenian kings were intensified.

All the activities of Tigranes in the 90's and early 80's BC show that he was at that time a Parthian nominee and a Parthian political agent. Through Tigranes' support for Pontos, the Parthians tried indirectly to counter the Roman advances in Anatolia and the planned Armenian operations in Kapadokia were against Rome's interests. Only from about 80 BC, when Parthia faced internal struggles, did Tigranes become independent. He took part in the internal Parthian conflicts strengthening his position at the expense of the Arsakids.

It was decisive support from the Parthians that prompted Mithridates Eupator to wage an open war on Rome in 89 BC. Politically and militarily the prospects for Pontos were good. Later, events took a turn for the worse, both in Pontos, and in Parthia. The civil war in Parthia, in which Tigranes was involved, annihilated the previous political constellation of the 90's and early 80's, in which Pontos, Armenia, and Parthia constituted a strong and very dangerous alliance for Rome.

The power of Pontos collapsed for several reasons, but an essential factor was that Mithridates Eupator was deprived of Parthian assistance in the 70's and 60's BC, and had to rely on his own and to some extent on Tigranes' resources. Mithridates Eupator, aware of Arsakid power, tried to renew the old alliance with Parthia but the new Parthian rulers, Sinatrukes and Phraates III, were far more passive in their western policy than Mithridates II. Until

the wars between Rome and Parthia under Orodes (57-38 BC), the Parthian strategic perspective did not reach beyond the Euphrates.

When in the winter of 69/68 BC Mithridates Eupator and Tigranes approached the Parthians with a view to an alliance, it was too late to stay the course of events and bring Roman military advances in Anatolia to a standstill. The Romans were able to secure their position in Anatolia and in Syria without Parthian countermeasures. Later they tried to crush and subjugate Parthia, but this proved impossible for Rome.

Notes

- 1 On Roman policy in Asia after 188 BC through the Mithridatic Wars, see Magie 1950; Badian 1958; Sherwin-White 1977b; 1984; Will 1982, 285-301, 379-385, 461-505; Gruen 1984, 529-610; Kallet-Marx 1995.
- 2 Polyb. 29.27; Liv. 45.12; App. *Syr.* 66; Joseph. *BJ* 12.244. Cf. Will 1982, 322-323.
- 3 Polyb. 30.19; Liv. *Per.* 46; Just. *Epit.* 38.6.4.
- 4 Polyb. 30.18; Liv. 45.44.4-21; Diod. Sic. 31.15.
- 5 Literature on Mithridates VI Eupator and the Pontic Kingdom is ample. See, e.g. Reinach 1890; 1895; Molev 1976; McGing 1986; Hind 1994; Strobel 1996; Ballesteros-Pastor 1996; Callataÿ 1997; Olshausen 1978; 2000; Heinen 1991, 2005a; 2005b; Saprykin 1996; Olbrycht 2004a; Højte (ed.) 2005.
- 6 Kennedy (1996, 73) formulates an essential observation concerning the political geography of the Parthian Empire stressing its connections to Syria and Anatolia.
- 7 Strab. 12.1.4.
- 8 See Panitschek 1987-1988.
- 9 See Bosworth & Wheatley 1998.
- 10 Heinen 1991; Callataÿ 1997, 245-264; Olbrycht 2004a.
- 11 Sherwin-White 1977b, 71-72.
- 12 On the history of Kappadokia, see Sullivan 1980; Henke 2005.
- 13 On the history of Parthia, see Debevoise 1938; Ziegler 1964; Schippmann 1986; Wolski 1993; 2003; Olbrycht 1998a; 1998b; 2003.
- 14 The efforts of Demetrios II and Antiochos Sidetes to recover the lost areas ended in disastrous defeats cf. Will 1982, 407-416; Olbrycht 1998b, 84-87; 2004a.
- 15 Just. *Epit.* 42.2.3. On Mithridates II, see Debevoise 1938, 40-50; Wolski 1993, 88; Olbrycht 1998b, 96-105.
- 16 Just. *Epit.* 42.2.4-5.
- 17 Schuol 2000, 299.
- 18 Olbrycht 1998b, 102.
- 19 Olbrycht 1998b, 103. The title “šar šarrāni” appears in the year 204 in the Seleukid era, i.e. 108/107 BC, cf. Oelsner 1975, 35, but it might have been introduced a year before. See also Frye 1984, 214.
- 20 Wolski 1964, 156-157; 1966, 74; 1977b; Olbrycht 1997.
- 21 It was Mithridates II (124/3-88/7 BC) who, having first worn a diadem alone, had himself pictured on coins in a Parthian type *tiara*. Cf. Olbrycht 1997.
- 22 One example was the final introduction of the ruler's left profile on coin, in contrast to the Hellenistic practice, cf. Vardanian 1992.
- 23 On Armenia as a bone of contention between Parthia and Rome, see Wolski 1980a; 1980b; 1983; 1989; 1993; Chaumont 1987; Arnaud 1987; Olbrycht 1998b.

- 24 Strab. 11.14.15; Just. *Epit.* 38.3.1. On the war of Mithridates II against Armenia and its dating about 120 BC, see the excellent analysis by Schottky 1989, 219.
- 25 Just. *Epit.* 38.9.10. The validity of the claim is stressed in Wolski 1976, 202, n. 25; 1977a; 1989, 641-642.
- 26 Schippmann 1986, 527.
- 27 Joseph. *AJ* 13.14.3. Full analysis in Bellinger 1949, 76-79; Dabrowa 1992; Kennedy 1996, 78; Ehling 2008, 245-246.
- 28 The last coins of Demetrios are dated 88/87 BC, cf. Bellinger 1949, 77 and Hoover 2007, 293-294.
- 29 On the history of Kommagene, see Sullivan 1977; Wagner 1983; Dörner 1981; Weiskopf 1993; Facella 2006.
- 30 Diod. Sic. 31.19a.
- 31 *OGIS* 383; *IGLS* 1; cf. Grainger 1997, 48; Sullivan 1990, 65.
- 32 Strab. 16.1.22.23; 16.2.2-3; App. *Syr.* 48; Cic. *Fam.* 8.10.1; Dio Cass. 49.13; Plin. *HN.* 5.86.
- 33 Antiochos I arranged the marriage of his daughter Laodike to Orodes of Parthia (c. 57-38 BC), see Facella 2006, 136. In 51-50 BC, Parthian troops were allowed to cross Kommagene to raid Roman Syria, see Cic. *Fam.* 8.10.1, 15.1-2, 4.4. Even under the Flavian dynasty, Kommagene was suspected of favouring the Parthians, see Joseph. *BJ* 7.219.
- 34 Joseph. *AJ* 13.13.4.
- 35 On Antiochos X Eusebes Philopator, see Grainger 1997, 33 and Ehling 2008, 236-242.
- 36 A detailed discussion on the passage is offered by Dobiáš 1931, 221-223.
- 37 Euseb. *Chron.* 1.261.
- 38 App. *Syr.* 48 and 69.
- 39 Sources on Antiochos XIII Asiaticus are collected in Grainger 1997, 34-35.
- 40 Bellinger 1949, 75, n. 73; Ehling 2008, 241.
- 41 Bellinger 1949, 75, n. 73; Will 1982, 452; Facella 2006, 216. Euseb. *Chron.* 1.261 states that quarrels between Antiochos X and Philippos I started from the third year of the 171st Olympiad, i.e. 94/93 BC. Historical sources prove that Antiochos X ruled for some time at Antiochia but was driven out of the city, see Eus. *Chron.* 1.261 with Bouché-Leclercq 1913, 420 and Hoover 2007, 290. An market weight from Antiochia with the name of Antiochos (X) dated to the year 220 of the Seleukid era (Ehling 2008, 242) testifies that the city of Antiochia was controlled by Antiochos X in 93/92 BC. After 93/92 BC, no coins were minted in the name of that ruler. The fact that in the year 221 of the Seleukid era (92/91 BC) the mint of Antiochia began to issue coins in its own name (Hoover 2007, 290 & 295-296) implies that an essential political change took place in the city. All these facts suggest that Antiochos X was indeed killed in 92 BC (so Ehling 2008, 241). Hoover (2007, 293-295) tries to show that Antiochos X did not die in 92 BC but continued to rule over Antiochia for several years, probably to 89/88 BC. However, his arguments concerning Antiochos X and his successors including Tigranes are highly speculative for they contradict the data offered by literary sources. Cf. Ehling 2008, 250-256.
- 42 Niese (1955, XXI-XXII) discusses the textual transmission of the passage. Cf. Dobiáš 1931, 221-223.
- 43 Cf. Grainger 1997, 772. Dobiáš (1931, 223) accepts that the Samenoi were an Arabian tribe.

- 44 Bouché-Leclercq 1913, 420-421, 605 (drawing on A. von Gutschmidt 1888, 80).
- 45 Facella (2006, 216-217) is sceptical of Laodike's connection to Kommagene. According to Kennedy (1996, 78) she ruled a tribe in Syria.
- 46 Josephus does not mention Mithridates Kallinikos whose nickname suggests a militarily successful king. But in that age of petty rulers the name Kallinikos was quite often abused and referred to rulers without real significance. One can point to Antiochos XII Dionysios Epiphanes Philopator Kallinikos who ruled several years in Syria in the 80's and was killed in battle – see Grainger 1997, 34. The internal situation in Kommagene is not known in details, but there may have been many explanations for the fact that Kallinikos does not appear in Josephus' account. He might have been in Parthian captivity.
- 47 Strab. 14.5.2.
- 48 Bellinger (1949, 77, n. 82) maintains that the Parthians received "some concession" in Kilikia as reward from Philippos for their cooperation in Syria in 88/87 BC.
- 49 So Boucher-Leclercq 1913, 421, n. 2. He assumes that in about 92 BC, when Sulla came to Anatolia, the Parthians controlled Kilikia. Against Bellinger 1949, 75, n. 74.
- 50 Strab. 14.5.2. See also Diod. Sic. 33.28a-28b. Cf. Sherwin-White 1977b, 67, n. 39; Mattingly 1986.
- 51 On the monument, see P. Kreuz in this volume. Cf. McGing 1986, 90-91.
- 52 On Antiochos Grypos, see Grainger 1997, 31-32. Grypos is commemorated by several statues on Delos and he dedicated a statue to the Roman governor of Asia, Gnaeus Papirius Carbo. On Eupator's attempts to establish closer links to Syria, see App. *Mith.* 13.
- 53 *IDelos* 1581-1582. Cf. SEG 36, 741. Contrary to Huyse (1995, 102) the inscriptions do not refer to "Weihgaben zweier arsakidischer Würdenträger".
- 54 Strab. 12.3.28.
- 55 On Tigranes, see Geyer 1936; Manandian 1963; Chaumont 1985-1988; Manaserjan 1985; Schottky 2002; Garsoian 2005.
- 56 Plut. *Luc.* 21. Detailed discussion in Schottky, 1989, 216, n. 240. The date 95 BC is accepted by Geyer 1936, 970; Sullivan, 1990, 98; Callataÿ 1997, 274. Chaumont (1985-1988, 21) approves 95 BC, but she does not exclude the years 96 or 94 BC. Tigranes II died in about 55 BC (Cic. *Sest.* 59; Plut. *Crass.* 19) at the age of 85 (cf. Lucian, *Macr.* 15).
- 57 Strab. 11.14.15; Just. *Epit.* 43.3.1. According to Schottky (1989, 222), the "Seventy Valleys" were in Kaspiane – a plain on the Caspian Sea.
- 58 E.g. Sullivan (1990, 116) names several factors, which might have forced the Parthians to release Tigranes and remarks: "Mithridates II sought to tie himself firmly to Tigranes". It escapes my understanding how a mighty ruler like Mithridates II was forced to win favour of his vassal just placed on the throne granted by the Arsakid King of Kings himself?
- 59 The document is dated to the year 225, month Apellaios in the Seleukid era, which gives November of 88, see Minns 1915, 38.
- 60 Aryazate might have been Mithridates II's wife already prior to 95 BC, cf. Schottky 1990, 214.
- 61 Just. *Epit.* 38.3.1
- 62 Just. *Epit.* 38.3.2 links the marriage between Kleopatra and Tigranes with Tigranes' action in Kappadokia. On the alliance between Tigranes and Eupator, see Reinach 1895, 309.

- 63 For Tigranes' subjugation of Sophene, see Strab. 11.14.15; 12.2.1. Sullivan (1990, 99) rightly dates the event "soon after his accession". According to Manaserjan (1985, 109), Sophene's seizure by Tigranes was an anti-Parthian act, but this contradicts the historical reality.
- 64 Strab. 11.14.15 with Sullivan 1990, 99. Stephanos of Byzantion (s.v. Sophene) calls Sophene's ruler Arsakes, but this is probably a mistake.
- 65 Diod. Sic. 31.22.
- 66 The geographical peculiarities of the region are reported by Strab. 12.2.1. He underscores the links between Melitene, Kommagene, and Sophene. Cf. Sullivan 1990, 99.
- 67 Memnon, *FGrH* 434 F 1, 22.3-4 with corrections by McGing 1986, 63, n. 85, and comments by Heinen 2005b, 83-87.
- 68 Cf. Olbrycht 1997, 44 (for Greater Media); Schottky 1989 and 1990 (for Media Atropatene).
- 69 For the history of Iberia, see Lordkipanidze 1996; Braund 1994.
- 70 Strab. 11.14.5. Cf. Braund 1994, 153.
- 71 Olbrycht 2001a; 2001b.
- 72 For Kolchis as part of Eupator's Empire, see Strab. 11.2.18; Memnon, *FGrH* 434 F 1, 22.3. For Armenia Minor, see Strab. 12.3.28. Cf. Molev 1979; Šelov 1980; Callatay 1997, 253.
- 73 App. *Mith.* 15.
- 74 Ath. 213a (Poseidonios of Apameia). Edelstein-Kidd. Cf. the comments in Desideri 1973; Kidd 1988, 874; Malitz 1983, 350. It was Athenion who made the first announcement in Athens of Eupator's victories over Rome at the beginning of the first war.
- 75 Sherwin-White 1977b, 72. He adds that "militarily the prospects were good" but Mithridates Eupator "miscalculated not only the effectiveness of the Roman war machine at the moment but the spirit of contemporary Roman imperialism" (73-74).
- 76 Callatay 1997, 273-274.
- 77 Cf. the table in Callatay 1997, 283. See McGing 1986, 86.
- 78 Callatay 1997, 242-244. Silver was mined near Pharnakeia, see Hind 1994, 135.
- 79 Bellinger (1949, 79) thinks that the Parthians supported Philippos in minting his "surprising amount of silver". Ehling (2008, 245) rejects the possibility that the Parthians supported Philippos financially and maintains that the bulk of Philippos' coinage were posthumous issues minted after the Roman annexation of Syria. However, the reason for the posthumous production of Philippos' coins under Roman rule, rather than of those of the last Seleukid king Antiochos XII, was apparently the fact that the issues minted by Philippos constituted the most important part of the late Seleukid coinages. On the coins minted in the name of Philippos from the 50s BC until the reign of Augustus reign, see Burnett, Amandry & Ripollès 1992, 606-607. See also Hoover 2004.
- 80 Olbrycht 1998b, 104; 2001a.
- 81 Sall. *Hist.* fr. 6.16 refers to large amounts of arms and gold in Parthia. Characteristically the letter, written in connection with the events of the years 70/69 BC (see below), puts emphasis on Parthia's wealth and huge resources.
- 82 For sources and references, see McGing 1986, 75-77.
- 83 Just. *Epit.* 38.2.8; 38.5.9; Strab. 12.2.1.
- 84 Plut. *Mar.* 31.1-2; Cic. *Brut.* 1.5.3. Cf. Kallet-Marx 1995, 245-247.

- 85 Callataÿ 1997, 29-52; Gabelko 2005, 152.
- 86 Callataÿ 1997; McGing 1986, 97.
- 87 The phrase is used by McGing 1986, 84.
- 88 Just. *Epit.* 38.3.2-3; App. *Mith.* 12.2.10. Callataÿ (1997, 274) places the action at the beginning of 94 BC.
- 89 Sherwin-White (1977a, 175) rightly observes that the open defiance of the Senate's decision in favour of Ariobarzanes by Mithridates Eupator "does not fit with his cautious attitude in these years". The explanation for this behaviour is the emergence of the new, strong alliance of Pontos, Armenia and Parthia.
- 90 Plut. *Sul.* 5.
- 91 Frontin. *Str.* 1.5.18 with McGing 1986, 78, n. 46.
- 92 Ziegler 1964, 20.
- 93 Badian 1959. This date is accepted by Keaveney 1981; Brennan 1992; Kellet-Marx 1995, 355; Wolski 2003, 76.
- 94 Sherwin-White 1977a, 173-183. He is followed by McGing 1986, 78-79 (he does not exclude 95 BC) and Callataÿ 1997, 205.
- 95 Sherwin-White 1977b, 72; 1984, 109-111.
- 95a But the year 93 BC still remains an option. 92 BC seems too late if one thinks that the Romans usually intervened without delay when faced with foreign threats in Anatolia. New arguments for the dating of Sulla's Kappadokian expedition to the period from 94 to 92 BC are presented by Dmitriev (2006, 296-297).
- 96 Sherwin-White 1977b, 72. See McGing in this volume.
- 97 Plut. *Sul.* 5; Liv. *Epit.* 70; Vell. Pat. 2.24.3; Festus 15.2. On the negotiations, see Dobiáš 1931, 218-221; Debevoise 1938, 46-47; Ziegler, 1964, 20-23; Keaveney 1981, 195-199; Wolski 1980b, 257; 1993, 92-93; 2003, 76.
- 98 Plut. *Sul.* 5.4.
- 99 On the meeting place, Ziegler 1964, 20, n. 2.
- 100 Plut. *Sul.* 5.4-5.
- 101 See, e.g. Sullivan 1990, 118-119.
- 102 Flor. 3.12 (in the account of Crassus' campaign against Parthia).
- 103 On the poor credibility of Florus' account on Sulla, see Ziegler 1964, 22. Oros. 6.3.12 speaks of two treaties between Parthia and Rome concluded under Lucullus and Pompeius.
- 104 Such a view is presented by Ziegler 1964, 22 and Keaveney 1981, 198.
- 105 In some sources, this river appears as the limit for Roman conquests under Lucullus and Pompeius, cf. Oros. 6.13.2: *vehementer increpitus est* (sc. Crassus by Parthian envoys) *cur contra foedus Luculli et Pompei (...) Euphratem transierit*.
- 106 Wolski 2003, 76.
- 107 Keaveney 1981, 199.
- 108 Sullivan 1990, 119.
- 109 Sullivan 1990, 118.
- 110 Manaserjan 1985, 115.
- 111 Just. *Epit.* 38.3.5. Justinus places this passage after Tigranes' first intervention in Kappadokia and before the First Mithridatic War.
- 112 App. *Mith.* 10. Cf. Just. *Epit.* 38.3.5. Callataÿ (1997, 276) proposes the summer of 91 BC. According to Dmitriev (2006, 297), the intervention took place "sometime from 91 to 89".
- 113 So Reinach 1895; Desideri 1973, 3; Manaserjan 1985.

- 114 App. *Mith.* 10.
- 115 Callataÿ 1997, 283-284.
- 116 McGing 1986, 79-80. Liv. *Epit.* 74 places the restoration of Nikomedes IV and Ariobarzanes between the events of 90 and 89 BC. Aquillius' army consisted of the forces led by the Pergamene governor Lucius Cassius, of the Galatians and Phrygians, see App. *Mith.* 10.
- 117 App. *Mith.* 11.
- 118 App. *Mith.* 11, 12-14; Liv., *Epit.* 74. Cf. Sherwin-White 1977a, 176.
- 119 App. *Mith.* 12
- 120 App. *Mith.* 13.
- 121 App. *Mith.* 15. See Hind 1994, 144.
- 122 App. *Mith.* 67. Cf. Plut. *Luc.* 26.1; Strab. 11.14.15, 12.2.9.
- 123 App. *Mith.* 11. Cf. McGing 1986, 82-84.
- 124 I agree with McGing's (1986, 87) statement: "This apparent compliance right up to the last minute can be regarded as tactical preparation for war. Eupator intended to lull the Senate and Aquillius into a false sense of security".
- 125 Memnon, *FGrH* 434 F 1, 22.6: 190,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry; App. *Mith.* 17: 250,000 infantry, 50,000 cavalry, 400 ships, 130 chariots.
- 126 There were negotiations between the rebels in Italy and Eupator (Diod. Sic. 37.11).
- 127 See especially, among recent treatments, Magie 1950, 210-231, 1100-1110; Glew 1977; 1981; Sherwin-White 1984, 121-148; McGing 1986, 89-131; Ballesteros-Pastor 1996; Mastrocinque 1999; Olshausen 2000.
- 128 On the history of Parthia after Mithridates II, see Ziegler 1964, 20-32; Arnaud 1987.
- 129 "Arsakes called Gotarzes" and his wife Ashibatu appear in Babylonian texts dated 90-87/86 BC. Thus the reign of Gotarzes began as co-ruler of Mithridates II in 90 BC, see Olbrycht 1998b, 107. Some texts from Babylonia mention then king "Arsakes" for the period Nisan (April) 86-81/80 BC, see Oelsner 1975. This Arsakes is to be identified with Gotarzes, ruling after his fathers death.
- 130 Olbrycht 1998b, 109.
- 131 Olbrycht 1998b, 110-113.
- 132 Just. *Epit.* 40.1.1-3.
- 133 So rightly Bellinger 1949, 80. Cf. Sullivan 1990, 373, n. 8. The timing of Tigranes' intervention in Syria can be surmised from Just. *Epit.* 40.1.4 and App. *Syr.* 48.
- 134 App. *Syr.* 48 and Strab. 11.14.15. On Antiochos (X) Eusebes, see Grainger 1997, 33-34.
- 135 On Tigranes' empire after 83 BC, see Sullivan 1990, 102-105; Garsoian 2005.
- 136 This is implied by Sall. *Hist.* fr. 6.3.
- 137 Strab. 11.14.15; Isid. *Char. Mans. Parth.* 6; App. *Syr.* 48-49; Plut. *Luc.* 14.5, 21, 26; Eutr. 6.8.4; Dio Cass. 36.6.2; 36.14.2; Oros. 6.4.9. Cf. Geyer 1936, 971; Debevoise 1938, 51; Chaumont 1987, 420.
- 138 Chaumont 1987, 421. The title appears in Plut. *Luc.* 14.5; App. *Syr.* 48; Joseph. *AJ* 13.16.4; Just. *Epit.* 40.1; Eutr. 6.8.
- 139 Cf. Sullivan 1990, 101-102.
- 140 Memnon, *FGrH* 434 F 1, 29.6.
- 141 Memnon, *FGrH* 434 F 1, 38.1.
- 142 Memnon, *FGrH* 434 F 1, 38.8; App. *Mith.* 87. Cf. Dio Cass. 36.1.2, 3.1. Cassius Dio underscores that there was a quarrel between Arsakes and Tigranes concerning

a territory subjugated by the Armenian king. On the negotiations, see Ziegler 1964, 24-25.

143 Sall. *Hist.* 4, fragm. 69 (Maurembrecher ed.)

144 The letter is based on a close knowledge of eastern reality and propagandistic notions. Pompeius captured the private archives of Mithridates at Kainon Chorion, see Plut. *Pomp.* 37.

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Abbreviations

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